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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000906

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ITALY SEEKS USG CERTIFICATION FOR M113 TRANSFER TO MACEDONIA

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR THOMAS COUNTRYMAN  
FOR REASONS 1.5(B)(D)

1. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. SEE PARA 4.

2. (C) THE ITALIAN MOD HAS PREPARED A "NON-PAPER" JUSTIFYING ITALY'S TRANSFER TO MACEDONIA OF AN ADDITIONAL 30 MILITARY TRANSPORT VEHICLES (M113) WHICH REQUIRES AN END USER  
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CERTIFICATE FROM THE USG. THE TRANSFER IS THE SECOND INSTALLMENT UNDER A FOUR-YEAR OLD ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN ITALY AND THE FYROM PURSUANT TO WHICH ITALY TRANSFERRED 30 M113S IN 1998 WITH USG CONSENT. ACCORDING TO DEFMIN DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR FRANCESCO TRUPIANO, MACEDONIAN MILITARY OFFICIALS CONTINUE TO PRESS THE GOI TO RELEASE THE REMAINING VEHICLES. TRUPIANO HAS ASKED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AS TO WHY THE USG IS WITHHOLDING CERTIFICATION FOR THE SECOND M113 TRANSFER. AFTER POLMIN COUNSELOR EXPLAINED USG CONCERNS ABOUT THE FYROM'S NONSYSTEMATIC MILITARY ACQUISITIONS, HE AND TRUPIANO AGREED TECHNICAL LEVEL DISCUSSIONS WITH USG AND GOI OFFICIALS WOULD BE USEFUL TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE TRANSFER IS CONSISTENT WITH MACEDONIA'S NEEDS AND ITS NATO MEMBERSHIP ACTION PLAN.

3. (C) THE "NON-PAPER" (PROVIDED TO DESK AND EMBASSY SKOPJE SEPARATELY) EXPLAINS THAT THE M113S MEET A FYROM NEED FOR MILITARY TRANSPORT VEHICLES, AS RECOGNIZED BY THE PFP REVIEW PROCESS. THE PAPER JUSTIFIES THE TRANSFER AS ASSISTING FYROM'S EFFORTS TO REINFORCE ITS BORDER CONTROL CAPABILITY, AS REQUIRED BY NATO DURING THE JANUARY FYROM MAP TALKS. THE "NON-PAPER" FURTHER STATES THAT, BECAUSE THE FYROM HAS ASSIGNED THE M113S TO THE ITALIAN SASSARI SEEBRIG BATTALION, THE TRANSFER WILL ENHANCE INTEROPERABILITY. IN ADDITION, PARTS FROM THE M113S ARE NEEDED TO KEEP THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF VEHICLES IN OPERATION, ACCORDING TO THE "NON-PAPER".

4. (U) ACTION REQUEST. POST HAS USED ARGUMENTS PROVIDED BY EMBASSY SKOPJE IN E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS (FOR WHICH WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL) TO ARGUE TO ITALIAN MOD THAT THE TRANSFER IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH MACEDONIA'S MAP. HOWEVER, OUR  
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UNFAMILIARITY WITH THE MAP AND WITH THE MACEDONIAN MILITARY STRUCTURE LEAVES US SHORT OF TOOLS TO CONVINCE THE GOI OF THE NON-UTILITY OF THIS TRANSFER, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE MOD ARGUES THAT IT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO STANDING UP AN IMPORTANT SEEBRIG CAPABILITY, A GOAL WE ALL SHARE. WE THEREFORE REQUEST EITHER:  
-- A WRITTEN RESPONSE, CLEARED BY STATE, DOD AND EMBASSY SKOPJE, TO THE MOD'S NON-PAPER,  
-- OR, PREFERABLY, AN APPROPRIATE EXPERT FROM EMBASSY SKOPJE (AND, IF APPROPRIATE, USNATO) TO COME TO ROME FOR INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH ITALIAN DEFENSE OFFICIALS.  
END REQUEST.  
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